

**FORM B - BUILDING**

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

AREA

FORM NO.

C

241



Location Acton

Address 539 Massachusetts Avenue

Historic Name

Use: Present single family residential

Original barn

**DESCRIPTION**

Date circa 1870

Source maps/visual

Style Italianate

Architect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric clapboards

Outbuildings none

Major Alterations (with dates) conversion

to residence (c.1900); major alterations

(late 20thc)

Condition

Fair

Moved no Date

Acreage less than one acre

Setting Among a row of mid to late 19th

century houses lining Massachusetts Avenue

immediately east of West Acton village.

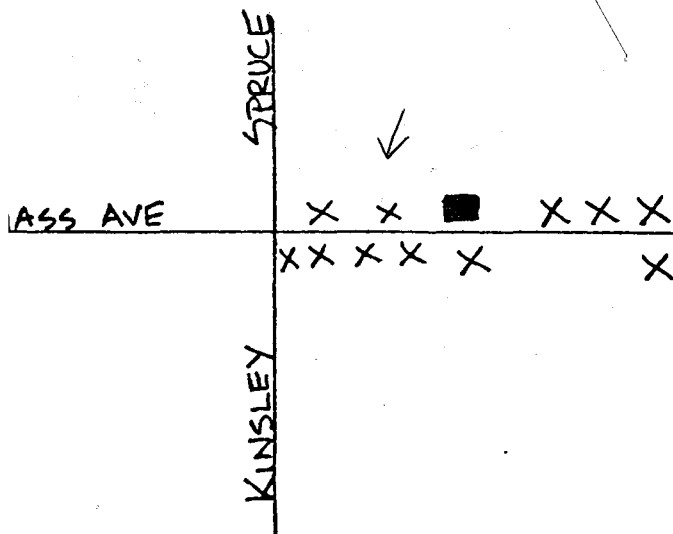
Recorded by Nylander/Schuler and Johnson

Organization Acton Historical Commission

Date March 1990

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventory intersection and nearest street.

*Map in error - 541 Mass?*



UTM REFERENCE

USGS QUADRANGLE

SCALE

**NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)**

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE** Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

See Inventory Continuation Form

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE** Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

See Inventory Continuation Form

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

Maps/Atlases: 1856; 1868; 1871; 1875; 1889; 1892

AHS Files

Phalen, History of the Town of Acton; Fletcher, Acton in History.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:  ACTON	Form No:  C-241
Property Name: 539 Massachusetts Ave	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

539 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE / ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

This much altered 1 1/2 story gable-roof building, built during the latter half of the 19th century, has been dramatically altered. Originally constructed in a vernacular form of the Italianate style, it has lost significant architectural integrity. Resting on a granite foundation, the three bay house is situated with its gable end to the street (south). A projecting pedimented portico with a lean-to roof extends west. Sheathed in new clapboards, the house retains little of its historic appearance. Windows have all been replaced with contemporary sash, including the installation of a picture window in the south facade.

539 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE / HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

The residence at 539 Massachusetts Avenue was constructed in the early 1870s according to historic maps (Walling/Beers). The radically altered gable-front building was very likely built as a storage facility by the A.O.W. Mead Company, a produce marketing business with several buildings in this vicinity (see 5-7 Spruce). Tax records (1870s) indicate that A.O.W. Meads owned a barn in this area. Although no owner is listed on the 1875 map, the building appears to be located on the Meads' property. By 1889, the structure is listed under O. Mead, presumably, Oliver W. Mead, one of the three brothers who ran the Mead's enterprise (see 262 Central). By 1916, the building was used as a two-family dwelling (Sanborn).

Begun in the 1840s, the Meads' produce marketing business was based in West Acton, where produce from surrounding farms was stored, and in Boston where goods were sold. The Meads were in business in Boston until the 1940s (see 5-9 Spruce Street).

On this section of Massachusetts Avenue, east of the village center, stood Mr. Robinson's store (see #536 Mass Ave), a school and factory (both demolished), and several single family houses built primarily between 1845 and 1885. This development was associated with the 1845 arrival of the railroad and subsequent commercial and industrial growth. During the latter half of the 19th century, West Acton's industries included a cigar factory and a grist mill, cider mills, produce marketing, tub and pail manufacturing, overall manufacturing, and several other enterprises. Before the railroad, the "village" at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue (Harvard Turnpike, 1799), Arlington Street (1735), and Central Street (1766) was a sparsely settled outpost known as the "west part of town."

